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UNCLAS ROME 003213

SIPDIS

USAID FOR TROSTLE, BLANCHET AND CARROLL  
HHS FOR WSTEIGER/PBUDASHEWITZ  
FAS FOR ITP/MACKE/THOMAS, CMP/DLP/WETZEL, FAS/JDEVER,  
ICD/PETTRIE  
FAS PASS FSIS AND APHIS  
VIENNA PASS APHIS  
CAIRO PASS APHIS  
BRUSSELS PASS APHIS/FERNANDEZ  
GENEVA PASS HEALTH ATTACHE  
ROME FOR US MISSION TO FAO

FROM THE U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

E.O. 12958:N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [AMED](#) [EAI](#) [CASC](#) [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [KPAO](#) [TU](#) [AVIAN](#) [INFLUENZA](#)  
SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA: FAO PRESS CONFERENCE ON TURKEY AI  
ASSESSMENT

REF: ROME 0087

1. SUMMARY: FAO SENIOR VETERINARY OFFICIAL JUAN LUBROTH GAVE A PRESS BRIEFING ON MONDAY, JANUARY 16, ON HIS MISSION TO TURKEY TO ASSESS THE AVIAN INFLUENZA SITUATION. THE FAO ASSESSMENT IS MORE OPTIMISTIC THIS WEEK COMPARED TO LAST WEEK WHEN FAO WARNED AI COULD BECOME ENDEMIC TO TURKEY. THE MAIN REASON GIVEN FOR THE MORE OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK IS THE MOBILIZATION OF PROVINCIAL LEVEL RESOURCES BY THE GOT AND GOOD COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GOT AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS, INCLUDING FAO, OIE, WHO, AND THE EU. END SUMMARY.

2. LUBROTH WAS IN TURKEY FROM JANUARY 10 TO JANUARY 14. HE REPORTED THAT THERE ARE 19 CONFIRMED OUTBREAKS OF HIGH PATH AI, BUT ONLY ONE HAS BEEN CONCLUSIVELY IDENTIFIED AS H5N1. THE OTHER 18 ARE H5, BUT OFFICIALS ARE STILL AWAITING CONFIRMATION THAT THEY ARE THE N1 STRAIN. THE CONFIRMED HPAI OUTBREAKS ARE LOCATED IN 13 OF TURKEY'S 81 PROVINCES. ACCORDING TO LUBROTH, NUMEROUS OTHER OUTBREAKS HAVE BEEN REPORTED AND ARE CURRENTLY BEING INVESTIGATED. HE SAID HE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF MORE H5N1 OUTBREAKS ARE CONFIRMED. THERE ARE 4 INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS ON THE GROUND IN TURKEY NOW (EXCLUDING THE US TEAM) AND 1 EU LAB EXPERT IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE THIS WEEK.

3. LUBROTH COMMENDED THE GOT FOR DEALING WITH THE AI OUTBREAK RESPONSIBLY AND MATURELY. HE CITED IN PARTICULAR THE GOT'S EFFORTS WITH RESPECT TO SHARING INFORMATION, REPORTING TO INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITIES, WELCOMING FAO/OIE/EU OFFICIALS AND WORKING CLOSELY WITH WHO AND ECDC.

4. LAST WEEK FAO WARNED THAT THE AI VIRUS COULD BECOME ENDEMIC IN TURKEY. AT THE PRESS BRIEFING LUBROTH SAID THERE WAS STILL TIME TO PREVENT IT FROM BECOMING ENDEMIC IF ADEQUATE RESOURCES CAN BE MOBILIZED TO PREVENT IT FROM SPREADING. HE SAID IT IS IMPORTANT NOW TO DETERMINE HOW WIDESPREAD THE INFECTION IS IN TURKEY; ARE WE SEEING THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG OR THE WHOLE ICEBERG?

5. ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR FAO'S INCREASED OPTIMISM IS THAT THE GOT IS DEDICATING MORE RESOURCES TO COMBATING AI. LUBROTH NOTED WITH APPROVAL THAT A MEETING OF THE GOT NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE, WHICH MET ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, PLACED THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS IN CHARGE OF OUTBREAK SITES. THIS ALLOWS THE USE OF PROVINCIAL LEVEL RESOURCES, INCLUDING THE MILITARY AND PUBLIC WORKS OFFICIALS, IN COMBATING THE AI OUTBREAK.

6. FAO SAID IT WAS LIKELY AI IS ALREADY PRESENT IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES SUCH AS IRAN, ARMENIA AND GEORGIA AND ENCOURAGED INCREASED SURVEILLANCE IN THOSE COUNTRIES. JOINT FAO/WHO MISSIONS ARE BEING ORGANIZED TO THE CAUCUSES REGION AS EARLY AS THIS WEEK. FAO SAID SYRIA AND COUNTRIES ALONG THE DANUBE BORDER ARE ALSO AT RISK. FAO ALSO CALLED FOR INCREASED SURVEILLANCE FOR IMPORTS OF CONTRABAND AT EUROPEAN AIRPORTS.

Hall